



## Missouri State Employees of the Month

January 2007, State Employee of the Month

### **Sherry Reeves – Department of Higher Education**



Sherry Reeves has served as a public servant to the citizens of Missouri for more than 20 years working in two state departments and in the Missouri legislature. Her positive and proactive approach has resulted in saving the state money and improved processes.

In her position of Accountant, she most recently displayed her commitment to process improvement during the Information Technology consolidation. Ms. Reeves was determining which telecommunication lines needed to be transferred when she noticed inconsistencies with the listing of the agency's telephone and other telecommunication lines and the monthly telecom bill. By comparing office blueprints of telecommunication lines and performing reconciliation she determined the agency was being billed for 7 phone lines that did not have service. She further recommended the agency disconnect 31 lines that were either vacant or that were modem lines no longer needed and the removal of unnecessary voice mail on several other lines.

As a result of her initiative and findings Sherry was able to save the state over \$10,000 per year in telecommunication costs. This is a 15% reduction in telecommunications costs for the Department of Higher Education.

Ms. Reeves is to be commended for her dedication to conserving resources for the Department of Higher Education and the citizens of Missouri.

February 2007, State Employee of the Month

### **Johanna Schwieter – Department of Social Services**



Johanna Schwieter, a Social Service Worker for the Department of Social Services, works with families in the Macon, Missouri area. Last fall while on a visit to the Macon Head Start program to check on the progress of a child in her care, Ms. Schwieter received information from the teacher that the family of this child was using a kerosene heater to warm their home. Knowing that kerosene heaters can often cause problems Johanna made the decision to visit the home of this family to check on their safety. When arriving at the family home she knocked on the door several times without receiving an answer. Smelling the odor of the kerosene heater she became concerned about the absence of someone coming to open the front door and called local law enforcement, reported her concerns then continued to try to receive a response from someone in the home. When the authorities arrived they also were unable to get a response, and were preparing to force open the door when the mother of the family finally opened the door and reported feeling ill. Examination by EMT's revealed she had been unconscious for an undetermined length of time and was displaying symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning which required her to be transported to the hospital where she received treatment.

The home was filled with the fumes and, had Ms. Schwieter not followed up on the instinct to check on this family, all the members of the family may have suffered severe health issues. Since the occurrence of this incident Johanna has worked with the family to ensure that the main heating source is working properly thus eliminating the need for kerosene heat. This exceptional commitment of service to a client was performed at 4:00 pm on a Friday with the drive to LaPlata from Macon taking approximately 25 minutes. Johanna could have accepted the information from the Head Start Provider and returned to work to leave on time for the day, but by going the extra mile, literally, she may have saved the lives of this family. Johanna is a valuable asset to the Department of Social Services and the citizens of Missouri and is to be commended for her outstanding dedication to service.

March 2007, State Employee of the Month  
**Howard Carter – Office of Administration**



As the Director of Data Centers, Mr. Carter is responsible for overseeing the operation of the State Data Center, e-mail servers, the mainframe environment, manages staff, sets strategic direction, and assures the availability of applications that handle critical functions. Over the last several months Howard went above the call of duty and took on a task that ultimately will save the state of Missouri tens of millions of dollars in future years. This March, a seven year agreement with a software company providing a key function for the state's mainframe was set to expire. This service is vital to operations and, in March of 2006 the State Data Center began negotiations for a new contract. A team worked with the vendor with Howard's role as an advisor, with little or no interaction with the team. In mid 2006 discussion stalled when the vendor held firm to a nearly three million dollar a year price for the services needed. The only option to signing this agreement was a costly migration from the current environment to a newer technology, with an estimated price of \$38 million over a 4 to 6 year period, or turn off the service and risk system failure, which would have been disastrous. The team's recommendation was to pursue legal action against the vendor and they abandoned the negotiation process.

It was at this point Mr. Carter stepped in; resurrected discussion and resumed negotiations with the vendor in an attempt to bring costs back down. This extra responsibility meant Howard often worked beyond normal hours and additionally spent many nights and weekends talking with the vendor's negotiators. Howard worked closely with the state's Chief Information Officer and the vendors leadership to find a mutually beneficial solution, and after a bold meeting with the state's and vendor's executives, was able to combine timing and strategic thinking to work out a multi-year deal that is nearly \$15 million less than the original proposal and about \$6 million less than the previous best offer. Not only is this a huge cost saving for the state, but it is a reduction in the current payments to the vendor. Howard's outstanding efforts to pick up when others had quit, and his tenacity in the face of adversity, make him a role model for others to exemplify. The state of Missouri and all of its citizens are well served by Mr. Carter.

April 2007, State Employee of the Month  
**Joseph LaBella – Department of Social Services**



Joseph LaBella, an Assistant Deputy Director with the Department of Social Services Family Support Division, performs a wide variety of complex and demanding tasks. In addition to his regular duties Mr. LaBella took on the role as project leader for implementation of the Securite Card, a prepaid debit card that provides a safer, quicker, and less costly way to receive child support payments. Through the efforts of this project team and partner agencies, the state will save an estimated \$2 million dollars per year by issuing child support payments electronically. Throughout the project, Joe provided coordination between the Department of Social Services Division of Budget and Finance, Office of Administration's Information Technology and Services Division, the Department of Revenue, the Family Support Payment Center contractor and its three sub-contractors. Not only did Mr. LaBella maintain his day-to-day job responsibilities, he was also instrumental in the development of a Request for Proposal to the issuance of over 87,000 Securite Cards nationwide.

This two-year project required a massive amount of research, planning development, testing, coordination and monitoring, and Joe oversaw each detail and continues to follow up and monitor all contacts related to the Securite Card. His tireless efforts ensured that the state's transition to electronic child support payments was smooth as possible for the public.

Joseph LaBella's commitment to quality makes him an exceptional employee and role model for others to emulate. He is an asset to the Department of Social Services and the citizens of Missouri.

May 2007, State Employee of the Month

## **Karon Schmidt – Department of Public Safety**



Karon Schmidt encounters life and death situations with elderly clients on a regular basis but seldom would expect to encounter a life threatening situation with a fellow co-worker. Ms. Schmidt was eating lunch in the facility dining room. All at the table were joking and enjoying the lunch break when one of the staff at the table began choking on a piece of meat from her lunch. The employee grabbed Karon's arm then put her hand up to her throat and she was struggling to breathe. Ms. Schmidt immediately jumped up, put her arms around the woman, and began the Heimlich maneuver. The employee collapsed against the table, was still not breathing and her face started to become blue. Karon administered two quick back thrusts, dislodging the piece of food, and the woman was again able to breathe. She thanked Karon for saving her life. Ms. Schmidt's quick thinking in an emergency undoubtedly saved the life of her fellow co-worker.

Karon is a leader for other nursing assistants in many ways, serves on the National Association of Geriatric Assistants leadership team, and routinely models professionalism to her peers. Her love of her work and compassion for all around her make her an invaluable employee and an asset to the Department of Public Safety.

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